

Glossary of Paper Terms

Learning the terminology used in the paper and printing industry can be daunting. Our list does not contain every paper term, but it has most terms we commonly use and a few that we have been asked about from time to time. Here are some simple definitions of some other terms you might see regarding paper:

- **Bible Paper** - A thin, lightweight, opaque printing paper generally made from 25% cotton and linen or flax in combination with chemical wood pulp. Bible paper typically has a long life. Bible paper is a premium grade of book paper. The name of bible paper comes from it being the type of paper commonly used for Bibles.
- **Bond** - Especially suitable to electronic printing and use in office machines including copiers and desktop printers, bond paper is a strong, smooth, durable paper. It is characterized by erasability, good absorption, and rigidity.
- **Book** - A type of paper suitable for printing, book paper can have many different finishes and may be coated or uncoated. Premium book paper is also called Bible grade. More opaque than bond paper and good for 2-sided printing, book paper is also characterized by excellent folding qualities and durability.
- **Bristol** - A heavyweight paper with a bulk thickness of .006" or higher. Bristol paper may be made by layering or laminating papers together to the desired thickness. The name comes because this type of paper, originally made from rags, came from Bristol, England. Bristol is often used for paperback book or catalog covers, file folders, tags and tickets.
- **Card Stock** - See Cover.
- **Coated** - Paper with a clay or other coating applied to one or both sides. The coating can be dull, gloss, matte, or other finishes. Coated paper generally produces sharper, brighter images and has better reflectivity than uncoated paper. Coated paper typically is smoother and is less absorbent than uncoated paper. Clay, latex, and/or other substances are mixed to create the coating.
- **Cockle** - An uneven, puckered surface created by air drying paper with a controlled amount of tension. It is often found in bond papers.
- **Cold Pressed** - Finished sheets of paper pressed between cold cylinders to produce a slightly textured surface are cold pressed.
- **Cover** - The term for a heavy, stiff paper. Some cover paper has matching book paper with the same colors and finishes. It is often used for book covers, file folders, presentation folders, greeting cards, business cards, and postcards.
- **Deckle Edge** - The ragged edge of the paper as it comes from the papermaking machine. Handmade paper normally has 4 deckle edges while machinemade paper has two. Left in place, the deckle edge becomes a decorative, textured edging. An imitation or fake deckle edge can be created by tearing or sawing the edge of the paper.

- *Different-sided* - See Duplex.
- *Double-faced* - See Duplex.
- *Double-sided* - See Duplex.
- *Dull* - A smooth paper with a low gloss finish is said to have a dull finish. More luster than matte but not high gloss. Dull finish papers can be utilitarian, such as some tissue papers used to stuff shoeboxes or wrap clothing. Dull finish papers can also be elegant choices for invitations and greeting cards - typically going by more elegant-sounding names such as velvet or satin finish.
- *Duplex* - Paper or cover stock usually made by bonding two sheets of paper together. Each side is different. Duplex paper may be a different color on each side, have a different finish on each side, or different textures. Not to be confused with the printing term duplex which means printed on both sides.
- *Eggshell* - An eggshell finish is paper with a fairly rough texture. It resembles the surface of an eggshell.
- *Embossed* - A design or pattern pressed into paper during the manufacturing process is an embossed finish. After drying, paper passes between engraved metal rolls to create raised, textured finishes such as a linen finish.
- *Feather Edge* - See Deckle Edge
- *Felt* - A paper that has a surface texture created by pressing the paper with patterned woven wool or synthetic felt belts during manufacture.
- *Granite* - Paper to which multi-colored fiber has been added to create a mottled surface that somewhat resembles the texture of granite.
- *Index* - A stiff, not too thick, inexpensive paper with a smooth finish. Popular choice for business reply cards. May also be used for postcards.
- *India Paper* - See Bible Paper
- *Laid* - Machine made paper that simulates the look and feel of handmade paper is said to have a laid finish. The laid finish has grids of parallel lines.
- *Lignin* - a naturally occurring component of plant life that helps provide strength in plants. Its presence in paper may contribute to the chemical degradation of the paper so it is sometimes removed during paper manufacturing.
- *Manifold* - A lightweight, dense and durable paper. It comes in gloss, matte or with a cockle finish.
- *Matte* - Coated paper with a dull, no-gloss or no-luster finish. Colors often appear softer on a matte finish. Text can be easier to read on matte finish papers than on glossy finished paper.
- *Mottled* - An uneven finish characterized by both dull and glossy areas on the same sheet of paper.
- *Natural Finish* - Paper manufactured with a soft, slightly fuzzy surface.
- *Offset Paper* - See Book.
- *Onionskin* - A lightweight, durable rag paper normally with a cockle finish although other glazed and unglazed finishes are available.

- *Parchment* - Once made from animal skins, the parchment paper look is now achieved by treating paper from cellulose fibers with sulfuric acid. Some imitation parchment paper has the mottled parchment look printed onto the paper.
- *Rag* - Once common, “rag” referred to the amount of cotton fiber relative to the other materials in the paper pulp. The term “rag” is not used as much today because other materials are used instead.
- *Ream Weight* - The actual weight in pounds of 500 sheets of paper regardless of the standard size or grade.
- *Reprographic* - See Bond.
- *Safety* - Specially treated paper that reveals attempts to alter it through erasures or printing is called safety paper. Safety paper may include a fine printed pattern on the surface.
- *Satin* - See Dull.
- *Suede* - See Dull.
- *Tag* - A dense grade of paper that is strong and durable.
- *Text* - See Book.
- *Tooth* - There are 2 meanings -
 - 1) The surface feel of paper. The more tooth a paper has the rougher it feels to the touch.
 - 2) A slightly rough finish that takes ink well. A preferred surface for charcoal and pastel art.
- *Two-tone* - See Duplex.
- *Uncoated* - Does not have any kind of coating such as applied clay or latex. Uncoated paper is available in many different finishes, colors, and weights. Uncoated paper is more absorbent than coated paper.
- *Vellum* - There are 2 meanings -
 - 1) An absorbent finish of paper, vellum finish is a slightly rough or “tooth” texture.
 - 2) A semi-translucent paper with a low gloss available in a wide variety of colors.
- *Velvet* - See Dull.
- *Watermark* - A watermark is the equivalent of a sewn-in label in a piece of clothing -- it tells you who made it. Depending on the manufacturer, it may also tell you more, such as the brand and the cotton content. Watermarks are most easily seen by holding a sheet of paper up to the light.
- *Wove* - Bond paper with a fairly smooth and slightly patterned mesh texture applied during the manufacturing process is known as wove finish. It is often used as writing paper.
- *Writing* - See Bond.
- *Xerographic* - See Bond.